

## II. APPEALS TO PRIVATE CHARITY

*The financial contributions asked for and obtained from public authorities and institutions were certainly not enough to help him confront the huge expenses of the Salesian Work. It was necessary to appeal to private charity. Logically, Don Bosco turned especially to families and individuals who had financial possibilities, meaning those belonging to the nobility, mostly large property owners, and the upper and middle class of the time who were notably ready to dispense charity. Some of these, albeit modest in their private savings, could actually find an outlet in educational and charitable works such as those of Don Bosco.*

*These then slowly, but uninterruptedly extended the geographical area of his potential benefactors, moving from the restricted circles of Turin and Piedmont, whom he knew personally, to the broader national and even international circle that he could reach through circular letters and private correspondence. He wrote frequently to his more generous French benefactors of latter years: the Quisnard family in Lyon, mademoiselle Claire Louvet and especially the Colle husband and wife couple in Toulon (76 letters) who offered sums today worth millions of euro.*

*His most conspicuous benefactors (Callori, Fassati, Ricci des Ferres, Corsi, Uguccioni, Mother Galeffi, the already mentioned Colle family and Louvet in France, Dorothy Chopitea in Spain...) Don Bosco approached personally while on his many journeys, often organised precisely because he was looking for liquidity in the recurring and unpredictable moments of financial crisis, when national and local charity was contracting.*

*Don Bosco's response to such generosity was "simply" heartfelt thanks, a sincere promise of prayers to the Lord or the Virgin for his part and by his boys, warm wishes of earthly but also eternal happiness both personally and for the family, and possibly an invitation to visit him and join him at a meal.*

*Among the many letters written by Don Bosco to individual benefactors in the course of his forty years of life spent amongst young people we publish around twenty selected according to two criteria: to provide examples of particular approaches to financial assistance (simple offers, loans, inheritances, purchase of shares, of items, lottery tickets, etc..) and examples of the various stringent needs for which Don Bosco asked for money: to pay bills incurred for food staples, buy food and clothing,*

*pay off debt, pay off rents and taxes, pay exemption of the clergy from military service, decorate houses and churches, organise missionary expeditions, etc.. There were additional costs for new constructions, acquisition and adaptation of existing buildings.*

*Obviously Don Bosco's benefactors were in the thousands, of all social categories and their names will remain mostly unknown, as also the sums provided, often directly, into Don Bosco's hands.*

### **126. To Abbé [Fr] Antonio Rosmini**

Critical ed. in E(m) I, pp. 119-120.

Turin, 7 January 1851

Most Esteemed and Reverend Sir,

It is my duty to share with your reverend Lordship that at the time we were drawing up the plan for the new future building I saw a good opportunity to have another similar one but more advantageous.

The owner of the house I currently live in is ready to sell, due to private circumstances; and with regard to these negotiations, we could conclude a contract by which we would acquire a house which can accommodate twenty people and a fenced-off area of 95 tables [= 95 square metres approx]. The price is twenty eight thousand five hundred francs.

Note here that the site acquired for the new building, if we sold it without haste, would amount to no less than 30,000 francs: this way we would exchange an empty site with one of equal size, a building and a fence. The location of the two sites is very similar and of equal benefit in that they are the same distance from the city.

If your Lordship was presently willing to lend the sum which we had already agreed on at another time, it would be a great asset to the Oratory. The new purchase would be entirely settled and you could ensure money for a house and site free of any burden. In improvements to the building, any part could then be assigned at our pleasure for the above-mentioned Hospice.

Father Puecher, Fr Scesa, Fr Pauli<sup>23</sup> have full knowledge of the place, it being precisely where the Oratory of St Francis de Sales is, the hospice for abandoned youngsters etc. I only await an indication from you to conclude the contract.

In the hope that you wish to cooperate with this work that I believe is for the greater glory of God, I wish you every blessing in the Lord. It is my distinct honour to be,

Your esteemed and reverend Lordship's most humble servant,

Fr John Bosco<sup>24</sup>

### **127. To Count Clemente Solaro Della Margherita**

Critical ed. in E(m) I, pp. 212-213.

Turin, 5 January 1854

Your Excellency<sup>25</sup>,

Although I have never appealed to Your Excellency for help, nevertheless the role you play in many works of charity and the serious need I find myself in gives me hope that you will kindly read what I am about to explain.

The increasing costs of foodstuffs, the large number of abandoned and destitute youth, the decrease in the many donations that private individuals used to give me but are no longer able to, has put me into such need that I do not know a way out. Without calculating all the other expenses, just the bill from the baker for this quarter amounts to more than 1,600 francs, and I do not yet know where I can find even a penny of that. But we need to eat, and

<sup>23</sup> We are speaking of three Rosminian Fathers.

<sup>24</sup> The Rosminians accepted the proposal and offered 20,000 lire of the 28,550 which Pinardi had asked for, for the sale of the "house with hayloft, yard and part of the garden" to the tontine [a kind of group insurance plan] society made up of Don Bosco, Fr Borel, Fr Cafasso and Fr Robert Murialdo: see no. 8.

<sup>25</sup> Clemente Solaro della Margherita (1792-1869), Minister for Foreign Affairs from 1835 to 1847, a member of the ultraconservative party, supporter of the absolute monarchy, was friendly with Cottolengo and Fr Cafasso.

if I deny a loaf of bread to these boys who are at risk and are a risk to others, I expose them to great peril for soul and body.

In this exceptional case I have deemed it appropriate to recommend myself to Your Excellency to see if you could lend me the help that your charity sees fit and recommend me also to other charitable individuals whom you would prudently consider likely to help this work of charity. It is not a case of helping one particular individual but of providing a loaf of bread for young people whose hunger puts them at the even greater risk of losing their morality and their religion.

Convinced that you will take these calamitous circumstances of mine into kind consideration, I assure you that I will always keep you gratefully in mind. Wishing you and your respectable family every blessing in the Lord, I have the greatest honour of being,

Your Excellency's most indebted servant,

Fr John Bosco

P.S. 1. If in your charity you consider making a donation in this case, you could, if you so judge, give it to good Fr Cafasso.

2. You are also respectfully invited to a religious performance that will take place tomorrow at 1.30 in the Oratory of St Francis de Sales.

### **128. To Count Pio Galleani d'Agliano**

Critical ed. in E(m) I, pp. 262-263.

Turin, 31 July 1855

Distinguished and worthy Sir<sup>26</sup>,

On return from the Retreat at Sant'Ignazio, it is my duty to write to your distinguished and worthy Lordship to thank you.

<sup>26</sup> Count Pio Galleani d'Agliano (1816-1889), former member of the Turin City Council, and a great friend of Don Bosco; in the summer he would stay in Caraglio (Cuneo), where he had Don Bosco as a guest.

With true sentiments of gratitude I received a hundred and thirty francs for raffle tickets that were recommended to your charity. I have also received 105 kg. of *grissini* from the baker which will help give something to eat to our poor orphan boys living here at the oratory. I also thank you for kindly arranging for fifteen kilograms a month for the benefit of this house.

These outstanding works of charity will be precious pearls, which along with others will adorn the crown of glory that your Lordship, with the prudence of the serpent and simplicity of the dove is ensuring and preparing each day in Heaven.

Now I find I have a new need, but of another kind. I am working on an article for the *Catholic Readings*, and this means I will need to be away from Turin for some days taking care of that. A few times I thought of going to Caraglio and to your Lordship's house to be precise, but before doing so we need to ask permission of the owner! If you could give me a corner where I can rest, and take some books and exercise books, and something ad *refocillandam famem* I could leave here the morning of August 6 and return on the Saturday of the same week.

You will say to me—is there need to pay board? Heaven forbid! We can go halves in the stipend for my work. Meaning: if souls can draw some advantage from this booklet, I will yield half the profit to you for the hospitality you show me.

Meanwhile I pray with all my heart that you will accept this letter written perhaps a little over-confidently. Of course I will not fail to pray and get others to pray for you and your family. Full of respect and gratitude I have the great honour of being,

Your distinguished and worthy Lordship's most indebted servant

Fr John Bosco

**129. Circular to Benefactors**

Critical ed. in E(m) I, pp. 392-393.

Turin, the... of... 1860

Distinguished Sir,

The keen desire to provide for the ever-increasing moral needs of youth, the great number of young people asking to be taken into this house known as the *Oratory of St Francis de Sales*, make it painful for me to daily have to refuse poor boys, who left to themselves, leave us fearing they have a sad future ahead.

The current building, especially since we set up workshops inside the house, does not allow for an increase in number, nor do I have the means for extending it. So I have decided on a plan which I believe could please your Lordship and at the same time be useful for collecting the funds needed for a place suitable for accepting a greater number of boys than at present.

It would be a case of taking up a certain number of shares of 500 francs payable as follows: over the next two months of

August and September	200	francs
In January 1861, another	200	francs
In July the same year 1861	100	francs
	<hr/>	
	500	

Each shareholder however would acquire the right to send a boy to this house for study or a trade according to the individual's attitudes and interests. (See the conditions further down).

This way Your Lordship would be helping with two works of charity, enlarging a home for poor boys and benefiting one young man who he deems worthy of such a favour. In addition to being rewarded by God, you will also have someone in the house here who will bless the hand that helped him, thus removing him from danger and setting him on the path that leads to good.

If you are pleased with this idea and you would like to take part, I express my heartfelt gratitude from this moment, and I would ask you to let me know as soon as possible so I know how to proceed. I also humbly ask you to let the contents of this letter be known to people who you believe would like to take part in this work of public charity.

If the opposite should be the case I simply ask you to forgive me for the bother I have caused you. Please accept my wish that Heaven may bless you. Full of respect I am,

Your Lordship's most indebted servant,

Fr John Bosco

### **130. To Marchioness Maria Fassati**

Critical ed. in E(m) I, p. 625.

Turin, 22 December 1863

Worthy Marchioness<sup>27</sup>,

I am passing on a ticket for Emanuele asking you to enclose it with a letter if perchance you are writing to him.

I received the package from Countess Callori and I thank you for it. Yesterday morning I began the novena of masses and I will also get the boys to pray for this spiritual need.

Marchioness, we are in difficult straits these days. You had already told me of some possible financial help. If possible I will pass by this evening and whether you call it board or a donation for us it is always charity gratefully received to pay for the bread our poor boys consume.

May God bless you and all your family. Believe me, I am

Your most indebted servant,

Fr John Bosco

<sup>27</sup> Maria Fassati, nee de Maistre (1824-1905), former lady in waiting of Queen Maria Adelaide along with Countess Carlotta Callori (see no. 136), married Marquis Domenico Fassati (1804-1878). Great benefactors of Don Bosco, they had three children including Emanuele and Azelia.

### 131. To Baron Feliciano Ricci Des Ferres

Critical ed. in E (m) II, p. 740.

Turin, 15 March 1864

My dear Baron<sup>28</sup>,

I wanted to make a trip to Cuneo but I delayed, to check on the result of dealings with Mr Toselli.

However since he himself wrote to you and you will have already been able to discuss things, I will refrain from treating of this at length. Instead I prefer to speak to you about the continuation of his charitable efforts. This good Christian would be ready to bequeath or immediately give us twenty *giornate* [a 'giornata' is equivalent to about 3.8 square metres or the amount an ox can plough in a day] of land adjoining the other land he intends to give for Cuneo, and he would give it on behalf of this oratory, keeping for himself only what it brings in during his lifetime with some onus to be completed at the moment it no longer bears fruit. To the land he would also add a part of the building sufficient to make up a farmstead.

I need you, Baron, to help me make use of this donation. Would there be someone who would buy these twenty 'giornate' of land at his price? Could we not join it with the ten he would give for the infant school and make it all one farmstead? Would it not also be of some convenience for you, Baron?

These are the matters I wanted to take up personally when I went there but a minor indisposition has prevented me. Here we are dealing with someone who wants to buy, ensure his money for the land, while the work would serve to sustain expenses in this house and also set up the planned infant school.

Forgive me for bothering you, and I wish you, the Baroness and all your family every blessing from Heaven. I recommend myself and my boys to the

<sup>28</sup> Feliciano Ricci des Ferres (1816-1893), from Cuneo, friend and benefactor of Don Bosco. His son Carlo (1847-1925) married the daughter of the Marquis and Marchioness Fassati, Azelia in 1871 (1846-1901).



charity of your holy prayers and I have the pleasure of declaring gratefully that I am,

Your Lordship's most indebted servant,

Fr John Bosco <sup>29</sup>

### **132. To Chev. Zaverio Provana Di Collegno**

Critical ed. in E(m) II, pp. 146-147.

Turin, 5 July 1865

Dear Sir<sup>30</sup>,

Poor Don Bosco is in difficulties for going ahead with the church of Mary Help of Christians, so I am asking you if you would like to pay for a piece of it. The pieces would be:

1. Roof tiles.
2. The slats for the tiles.
3. The lintels supporting the slats.
4. The beams supporting the lintels.

Each of these lots (don't take fright) amounts to about four thousand francs, perhaps a few hundred less.

What do you say in your heart? I believe that Our Blessed lady will compensate you and prepare you and your dear Emanuele and Luigi a beautiful dwelling in Heaven because you are helping to build her house on earth.

<sup>29</sup> The Baron was ready to immediately offer 5,000 lire, but Don Bosco asked him for only 2,000 in May, as he had in the meantime received "some charitable help" and some other sums of money. He envisaged being able to pay the loan within a few months, thanks to the sale of some small real estate already about to be finalised. The Count set a preferred annual deadline (July 1865), even though he asked Don Bosco to repay the loan two months in advance.

<sup>30</sup> Francesco Zaverio Provana di Collegno (1826-1900), son of Senator Luigi (1786-1861), a close friend of Don Bosco. Widower since 1855, he had two children, Emanuele and Luigi.

Such an amount would not need to be paid immediately but during the year. I say with pleasure that the work has already reached the ceiling of the chapels and the middle of August I hope we will be at the roof stage.

I put the question, and I know the charity of your heart. Therefore do what you can and I will be ever content. At any rate I shall not fail to invoke the blessings of heaven upon you and your growing children, and I wish you every blessing.

I recommend myself and my poor boys to the charity of your prayers. I have the honour of declaring myself with great respect to be,

Your Lordship's most affectionate servant,

Fr John Bosco

### **133. To Countess Carlotta Callori**

Critical ed. in E(m) II, pp. 221-222.

Turin, 31 March 1866

Worthy Countess<sup>31</sup>,

Alleluia. It is Easter, so we are thinking of paying our debts. I have two thousand francs with your husband the Count. If he could give some thought to the other two, I will let him have them before the end of the week, otherwise I can use them up till June. If you have some place where I could bring them, good, and of course I can make a trip to Casale.

It was no longer possible for me to work on the booklet on the Blessed Sacrament<sup>32</sup>; but I believe the printing is being well looked after. The bishop

<sup>31</sup> Carlotta Callori (1827-1914), nee Sambuy, wife of Count Federico Callori di Vignale (1814-1890), member of the sub-Alpine parliament. Great benefactors of Don Bosco up until the 1850s, they are immortalised in a painting in the church of St Francis de Sales at Valdocco.

<sup>32</sup> *Pratiche devote per l'adriazione del SS. Sacramento*. Torino, Tipog. dell'Oratorio di San Francesco di Sales 1866, 126 p.

of Mondovì<sup>33</sup> sent me the manuscript and in the coming week we will begin setting up the typeface. It is a little bit long, but it will be acceptable.

Alleluia, Countess, and enjoy these festive days. May God bless you abundantly, your pious husband and all your respectable family.

I forgot something: the statue of Our Lady to place on the cupola of the new church is going to cost much more than I had expected. It has to be four metres high so of very solid copper and needing a lot of careful work. It will cost twelve thousand francs; one gentleman is offering eight thousand. I do not intend to bind you to providing the remainder unless this Mother has rained down gold coins [*marenghini*] into your account<sup>34</sup>.

May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with us always, and save us from approaching peril.

With heartfelt gratitude, I am,

Your most indebted servant,

Fr John Bosco

### 134. To Countess Enrichetta Bosco Riccardi

Critical ed. in E(m) II, pp. 240-241.

Turin, 16 May 1866

Worthy Countess<sup>35</sup>,

I am unable to come and visit your worthy self as I would like to, but I will come in the person of Jesus Christ hidden amidst the rags I am recommending

<sup>33</sup> Arch. Giovanni Tommaso Ghilardi (1800-1873), a Dominican, bishop of Mondovì from 1842 till his death. In his rapport with Don Bosco he favoured pontifical approval of the Congregation, even though he did not have (or want) a house in his diocese.

<sup>34</sup> The Countess obviously had her own bank account separate from her husband's.

<sup>35</sup> Enrichetta Bosco di Ruffino, nee Riccardi (1896-1874), used go to Fr Cafasso for confession. In 1845 he asked her to involve her husband, one of the two Mayors of Turin, in appointing Don Bosco as chaplain to the cemetery of St Peter in Chains.

to you so that in your charity you can mend them. It is wretched stuff in earthly terms but I hope it will be a treasure for eternity.

May God bless you and your efforts and all your family. I am honoured and with much respect I am,

Your most indebted servant,

Fr John Bosco

**135. To the President of the Oblate Sisters,  
Mother Maria Maddalena Galeffi**

Critical ed. in E(m) III, p. 52.

Rome, 17 February 1869

Worthy Mother President<sup>36</sup>,

In times past you often came to the charitable aid of the church and the poor boys living in Turin. Now it is not the ones in Turin but in Rome I am recommending.

With the approval of the Holy Father I would like to start a small home similar to the Oratory of St Francis de Sales, in Rome. San Caio also known as the Barberine with its attached building would be very appropriate. It is a nice area and would be convenient for boys living between this site and Trinità dei Monti to come for catechetical instruction and also to have a school there.

The difficulty lies only in the cost of the acquisition which comes to nine thousand four hundred *scudi*.

I already have some offerings, but I need you, out of love for the Lord and the Blessed Virgin to help me, between your charitable Sisters and others you are in good rapport with.

The other difficulty is the haste with which we need to finalise the contract, because others are about to begin negotiations should ours be interrupted.

<sup>36</sup> Maria Maddalena Galeffi (1810-1876), admirer and benefactor of Don Bosco, was the long-serving superior ("president") of the Oblate Sisters at the Oratory at Tor de' Specchi in Rome.

Mrs Merolli has shown herself willing to help us, and we need to encourage other pious individuals to join her; she will speak with you and you could encourage her and promise her God's blessing and that of the poor boys she will save thanks to her charity. They always pray for God to bless their benefactors<sup>37</sup>.

God bless you and all those who work in a particular way to benefit abandoned children, and recommending myself to the charity of your holy prayers I have the honour of most gratefully being,

Your most indebted servant,

Fr John Bosco

### 136. To Countess Virginia Cambray Digny

Critical Ed. in E(m) III, pp. 101-102.

[Turin], 25 June 1869

Worthy Countess<sup>38</sup>,

After ten days of a slight illness today I can take up matters once more and the first thing is to write to your worthy self.

I received the gift of 20 francs for the *Association of Mary*<sup>39</sup> and I am very happy to enrol yourself and your daughter. Thus although we are far away from one another we will always be present in our prayers before the Lord.

Archbishop Gastaldi received an advance of 4,000 francs which he considers to be very timely. He had already decided to close the seminary but now he can continue. He thanks you with all his heart and assures you of his prayers on your behalf.

<sup>37</sup> This effort to find a place in Rome also failed; Don Bosco had to wait until the 1880s before he could have a house in the city.

<sup>38</sup> Virginia Cambray Digny (1822-1909), nee Tolomei Biffi, wife of Count Luigi Guglielmo (1820-1906), Senator, Mayor of Florence, Minister for Agriculture, Industry and Commerce (1867), then Minister for Finance (1867-1869).

<sup>39</sup> See no. 43.

From what you have given me to understand I can hope for some help from your husband which would nearly cover the tax I have to pay for flour. There is an increase of around ten thousand francs for the thousand two hundred and fifty boys I need to provide for. We have no more resources, charity has decreased, and we have no income of any kind. See whether it is possible to send me some substantial help. This is something that only you are capable of doing at the moment.

Note that as well as the above-mentioned increase there is a tax of more than two thousand francs that I have to pay for the buildings housing our poor boys.

Have patience and do everything for love of the Lord. I will pray and I will get them to pray so much for you and your family.

May God bless you and your efforts. Pray for me too. With much gratitude, I am Your most indebted servant,

Fr John Bosco

### **137. To Countess Virginia Cambray Digny**

Critical Ed. in E(m) III, pp. 121-122.

[Turin], 6 August 1869

Worthy Countess,

Thank you for your constant concern on our behalf. You tell me that your contribution is little, but in view of the serious needs we are surrounded by it is worth much. My thanks also to the Count.

In the past [years] sometimes I was exempted from the tax on the building at our establishment where our poor boys stay. If you think it appropriate could you ask someone if it would be convenient to pass on another request.

The bishop of the house<sup>40</sup>, a holy and zealous man who is also very much in need, wrote me the letter that I am including. He does not know I am

<sup>40</sup> Maybe he meant the Archbishop of Turin Alessandro Riccardi di Netro.

writing to you so if for some prudent reason you do not want to be involved, things would remain between us alone. I note that the bishop does so much in his diocese and his need is real.

I received the photographs of Our Lady of Sorrows commemorating the death of your beloved son. I have entrusted them with pious people who assure me of special prayers for the soul of the deceased.

Lady Countess, you are so charitable to us and we thank you with all our heart. I assure you that especially at the Sacrifice of the holy Mass I will not fail every morning to include a special memento in the Mass.

May God bless you and all your family and especially your husband that amidst all your difficult affairs you may walk the way of salvation.

Just now something has come to mind. Could you not in some way speak of the Council and see that our Government be represented at least indirectly if not directly? If the government absolutely wants to remain apart from this, it would be setting itself on a very dangerous path. Past Sovereigns have known the reasons, and also present ones, even though they might not be orthodox, try to be favoured by the serious decisions these ecumenical councils usually make.

Thank you for the regards from Chev. Oreglia, and forgive the confidence with which I write. Please accept my profound gratitude. I am,

Your most indebted servant,

Fr John Bosco

### **138. To Senator Giuseppe Cataldi**

Critical Ed. in E(m) III, pp. 329-330.

[Turin], 1 May 1871

My good Baron<sup>41</sup>,

<sup>41</sup> Giuseppe Cataldi (1809-1876), from Genoa, businessman and financier. In 1870 he had made a villa at Genoa-Marassi available to Don Bosco to temporarily house a group of young working boys and their small workshop.

The kindness which you have shown me on a number of occasions gives me hope that you will patiently hear out what I am about to explain.

Last year we opened a College at Alassio where given the unexpected cost of the place, its setting up and renovation, we underwent very serious expenses. According to our agreement, the local Council was to help us with a grant of 10,000 francs, but since it could not collect sufficient taxes, despite every good will it left us to manage these expenses on our own.

I now need to find a benevolent individual who could lend me the corresponding sum and relieve me of two thousand a year and then the entire amount in five years: that was the obligation the Alassio Council took on. The college in this city, and ones in Lanzo, Cherasco, Borgo San Martino are all guaranteed by the Turin City Council.

If you can help me in these circumstances and give me this amount you will be effectively contributing to so many boys. They will owe you their civil employment, their religious vocation for some, and some perhaps will even owe the salvation of their souls to you.

Somebody was already supposed to speak of this matter. I don't know what was done. Things are as I have explained them. As you can see I am writing with every confidence, but do as you can and as the Lord inspires you<sup>42</sup>.

Whatever you do, I will never fail now and always to pray for you and all your family and especially for that family that must embrace a new state. I ask Heaven to give you steady health, long years of happy life and the precious gift of persevering in doing good. *Amen*.

I also recommend myself and our providential work to the charity of your holy prayers and I am most gratefully,

Your most indebted servant,

Fr John Bosco

<sup>42</sup> Once he knew the Senator was agreeable, on May 23, Don Bosco reduced his request by half. In 1872 he was already able to give back half of the loan. A few months later on June 11, 1872 he had to deal with a huge expense (37,000 lire) for the Institute at Sampierdarena, Genoa. Don Bosco went back to his generous benefactor once more. He did similarly again in January 1876.



### **139. To Mrs Lucini**

Critical Ed. in E(m) III, pp. 347-348.

Turin, 12 July 1871

My good lady<sup>43</sup>,

The kindness and charity I observed during your short stay in Piedmont and in our house encourages me to recommend myself to your help in an exceptional need.

We have 14 clerics affected by this recent legislation and they can seek release only until 31st of this month, July. After that they all join the army, no alternative<sup>44</sup>.

In my keen desire to keep these ministers of Jesus Christ for the Church I am appealing to your charity. The cost for each is L. 3,200 but I will accept with greatest gratitude whatever offering you are pleased to give. You will have the consolation of having cooperated in a very holy enterprise, while the clerics, once ordained priests, will gain souls for God and you, besides having the merit will also have people who will pray for you every day of your life.

Please greet Fr Cristoforo Fumagalli, Fr Paolo Colombo, Fr Giovanni Legnani for me, and your daughters Emilia, Carolina, Vittoria.

May God bless and keep you for many years of happy life and give you the precious gift of perseverance in doing good.

Pray for me. With gratitude, I am,

Your most indebted servant,

Fr John Bosco

<sup>43</sup> A benefactor from Bergamo, no further identification.

<sup>44</sup> According to the recent requirements of the law on military service, clerics can be exempted by paying the huge sum of 3,200 lire (about 14,000 euro today).

### **140. Circular for a small Raffle**

Critical ed. in E(m) IV, pp. 35-37.

[Turin, January-February 1873]

Worthy Sir,

The exceptional year we are going through also forces me to appeal for the first time to exceptional means.

The increase in the price of all kinds of food staples, the notable decrease in alms from many benefactors whose income has decreased, have put me in very straitened circumstances and in serious difficulties in providing bread and clothing for the boys who number more than 800 and live at the Oratory of St Francis de Sales. So we thought up the idea of asking for small donations of 10 francs, so that by multiplying the number of benefactors we could more easily cater for our need, as you will note from the accompanying tickets.

I am encouraged to appeal to the charity of N.... asking you to keep them for yourself or distribute them to particular people you know. One good person to encourage other donors has offered a valuable painting of Our Lady of Foligno(1); another good person offers thirty prizes of 100 francs each to be won in the draw that will be made after next March. All in all there are 31 prizes the first being the above-mentioned painting.

This work I am proposing is aimed at clothing the naked and giving bread to the hungry poor, so it is worthy of special gratitude before men and certainly has great merit before God.

For my part I will not fail to add my poor prayers to those of my poor boys to call down Heaven's blessings on you and all our donors, so they may be assured of the promise made by Our Saviour when he said: you will receive a hundredfold in this life and an eternal reward in the next.

With profound gratitude I have the honour of being,

Your most indebted servant,

Father John Bosco

(1) The *Madonna di Foligno o della pietà* is a work by the famous Raffaele Sanzio, born in Urbino in 1483 and died in Rome at only 37 years of age in 1520. This painting is a most expressive and vibrant one to the Holy Virgin in the clouds surrounded by a host of angels. Further down are St John, St Francis of Assisi, St Jerome, and in the centre a beautiful child playing with his heavenly Mother's mantle. The original of this marvellous work is in the Vatican Gallery. It has become a little discoloured over time. The best is the one being offered as first prize; an art expert says it is worth no less than 4,000 francs.

The poor boys at the Oratory of St Francis de Sales along with the undersigned, are appealing for the sale of these tickets.

*advice for those distributing them*

The one distributing them is asked:

1. To note the name and address of people given tickets so they can in time be notified of the numbers which have won prizes.
2. Before the end of March, remaining tickets, the charitable distributor does not wish to keep for himself, should be returned to the undersigned by whatever means causes less bother.
3. If instead of money someone wants to offer food, cloth, clothing or similar things, these will also be accepted with much gratitude, no matter how worn or used they may be.

Your most indebted servant,

Fr John Bosco

### 141. To Count Francesco Viancino di Viancino

Critical ed. in E(m) IV, pp. 160-161.

[Lanzo], 20 September[1873]

Dear Count<sup>45</sup>,

Now that the financial matter between Prussia and France is settled, I now have to exit from a battle more hotly contested than the one at Sedan<sup>46</sup>. Mr Coriasco, proprietor of the small house that separates the Oratory from the church of Mary Help of Christians, is finally ready to set up terms of sale.

One charitable person has helped me and I can provide fifteen thousand francs, also needed and which I deposited in the Credit Union.

Meanwhile to complete arrangements with the Protestant Morglia and get him to give a strip of land over for *public use* we have to send a declaration to the Council of State of what we are able to pay for the strip, and back that declaration with the fifteen thousand francs deposited in the above-mentioned Credit Union.

This means that *hic et nunc* we cannot use them.

At that moment I recalled what you once told me about the money deposited in the Credit Union as an offering for the hoped for church of St Aloysius or St John. So could you give me the sum of five thousand francs so I could scrape together what is needed for the Coriasco house? Free of the money above, I could use an equivalent amount for the church.

If you accept this proposal you will be worthy in the sight of Our Lady and her adopted son St John, both of whom are good payers. I am at Lanzo for the Retreat and will be in Turin on Saturday.

<sup>45</sup> Francesco Viancino di Viancino (1821-1904), leader amongst the Catholic nobility in Turin, president of the regional committee for the work of the Congresses.

<sup>46</sup> French-German battle in 1870.

I have not forgotten to pray for you while here and for Countess Luigia. I wish you both health and grace and recommend myself to your prayers. With gratitude, I am,

Your Lordship's most affectionate servant,

Fr John Bosco

### 142. To Fr Joseph Ronchail

Critical Ed. in E(m) V, pp. 98-100.

[Turin, after 22 March 1876]

Dear Fr Ronchail<sup>47</sup>,

Now that we have began, we have to carry things through to the end and resolve the problems that our *patronage de St. Pierre* are presenting us with. So if our good notary Sajetto can find 60 thousand francs worth of borrowings, amongst all the rest we can find 30 thousand which need to be paid in cash for the Gautier house. So:

1. Tell lawyer Michel and Baron Héraud to look for *ubique terrarum* to add something to something, meaning coins to coins, taking special care to cultivate Marchioness Villeneuve, who lives underneath the Baron, Count Aspromonte and all those who can help us in allotting charity from the Carnival.

Since the Mayor has often said he would take our side both as a citizen and head of the Council, which would also be looking for a contribution, it would be good to remind him to ask for a contribution to the 30 thousand that has to be paid in cash immediately for a work that is certainly most worthy of attention - the abandoned children in Nice.

<sup>47</sup> Fr Joseph Ronchail (1850-1898), Piedmontese, director of the house at Nice opened in 1875, was in charge of financial negotiations with local authorities and those promoting the purchase of a new location for the *Patronage Saint Pierre*.

Who knows if Mr Dellepiane might not come to our aid?

2. Working with Mr Pirone, Canon Daideri, and also Canon Bres to make some efforts in this exceptional case.

Tell Mr Audoli to use all his patience, charity and also his purse. Perhaps Fr Giordano could also help us. The bishop will still add something, but I will write to him at the appropriate time.

3. Meanwhile see that things go well, get an agreement, establish around two months to complete things. At the end of the month I am going to Rome and I will do what I can from there.

A fortnight before the date fixed for the notary deed write to me and tell me what is still lacking and I will find a way to send it to you, even at the cost of borrowing in Turin.

God wants this work and we cannot refuse without going against his holy will, and if we cooperate we will be sure of a good result. But it needs to be said that the devil will stick his tail in and we have to all act in agreement to cut it off.

It would also be good to tell the bishop about this matter but without making any demand of him.

Greet the above-mentioned gentlemen and let us pray in faith—Divine help will not fail us.

May God bless everyone. I am, in Jesus Christ,

Your most affectionate friend,

Fr John Bosco

### 143. Count Carlo Giriodi

Critical Ed. in E(m) V, pp. 479-480.

Vignale, 21 October 1877

Dear Chev. Carlo<sup>48</sup>,

In order not to go bankrupt I have fled Turin and I see that my only hope for salvation is the castle at Costigliole<sup>49</sup>.

So could you think about how to fix or better how to provide for my situation, which you can make your situation, since you did say that if I wanted something, just to come to you. That's right isn't it?

God willing I hope to be in Saluzzo on Thursday next at 5 in the afternoon, where I hope there will be an *omnibus* as far as your house.

There probably will be a teacher for the priest but there is something to adjust or better we need an understanding between you, the parish priest and myself and that will smooth things.

May God be good to you and all your family and pray for this poor individual who will always be in Jesus Christ,

A humble servant and friend,

Fr John Bosco

<sup>48</sup> Count Carlo Giriodi (1805-1878), from Turin, former President of the St Vincent de Paul Conference in Turin which many of Don Bosco's benefactors belonged to, such as Count Cays, Count Collegno, Marquis Fassati.

<sup>49</sup> Count's summer residence.

### 144. To Miss Clara Louvet

ASC A1870232 *Copie simplici*; ed. in E IV, p. 466.

Turin, 20 décembre 1884

Charitable Mademoiselle<sup>50</sup>,

Pendant que je vous écrivais ma lettre d'augure de bonnes fêtes, vous me prévenez avec votre charitable offrande de 300 francs.

Que Dieu récompense largement vos prières, vos augures, votre charité. Afin de témoigner notre reconnaissance nous ferons bien des prières à votre intention dans cette neuvaine; nos enfants feront aussi des prières, des communions, et moi j'offrirai le sacrifice de la sainte messe le jour de Noël.

Ma santé s'est beaucoup améliorée, mais je ne suis pas sûr de faire une promenade dans le printemps jusqu'à Lille. Nous verrons.

Que la crise agricole ne vous donne pas de la peine. Si les revenus diminuent vous diminuerez les bonnes oeuvres de charité, ou mieux vous les augmenterez, vous consommerez les capitaux, vous vous ferez pauvre comme Job et alors vous serez sainte comme Sainte Thérèse.

Mais non jamais. Dieu nous assure le *centuple sur la terre; donc donnez et on vous donnera!* Avec les fermiers soyez généreuse et patiente. Dieu est tout-puissant. Dieu est votre Père, Dieu vous fournira tout ce qui est nécessaire pour vous et pour eux.

Rélativement à la somme d'argent pour la famille de votre père, dans la crise actuelle c'est difficile de fixer. Je dirais de laisser par testament la somme de 30.000 francs. Vous ferez seulement une note testamentaire. Mais j'espère que le Bon Dieu permettra de nous parler personnellement, de nous entendre et de destiner mieux les choses.

<sup>50</sup> Clara Louvet (1832-1912) from Aire-sur-la Lys (France, Passo di Calais Department) generous benefactor, one of the most active collectors of offerings for the church and hospice of the Sacred Heart in Rome. She got to know Don Bosco in Nice in 1882 and entrusted herself to him for spiritual direction.



Je vous prie de dire à monsieur l'Abbé Engrand que je ne l'oublie pas et que toute la maison priera pour lui, et d'une manière toute spéciale pour vous, pour vos parents, vos amis, vos affaires pour le temps et l'éternité.

Veillez bien prier pour votre pauvre Don Bosco qui vous sera à jamais en Notre Seigneur,

Humble serviteur,

Abbé J. Bosco

*(Translation)*

My good and charitable lady,

While I was writing my letter of best wishes for these festive days, you beat me with your charitable offering of 300 francs.

May God richly reward your prayers, greetings and charity. To demonstrate our gratitude, we will pray for your intentions during this novena, our boys too will pray, offer their communions and I will offer my Mass on Christmas Day.

My health has much improved, but I am not sure I will make a trip in spring as far as Lille. Let us see.

I hope the agricultural crisis is not causing you difficulty. If the income lessens you will lessen your good works of charity, or better, you will increase them, consume capital, make yourself as poor as Job and then you will be holy like St Teresa.

Never. God will ensure a hundredfold on this earth so give and it will be given to you!

Be generous and patient with the farmers. God is omnipotent. God is our Father, God will provide everything needed for you and for them.

In reference to the sum of money for your father's family, in the current crisis it is difficult to establish. I would like to say, leave a sum of 30,000 francs as a testament. Make only a testamentary note. But I hope the good God will

allow us to speak personally, come to an understanding and direct things to the best.

Please tell Fr Engrand that I have not forgotten him and that all the house prays for him, and in a very special manner for you, your parents, friends, and for your temporal and eternal affairs.

Pray for poor Don Bosco who will always be, in Our Lord,

Your humble servant,

Fr J. Bosco

### **145. To Count Louis Antoine Colle**

ASC A1700842, Orig. Aut.; ed. in E IV, pp. 510-511.

Turin, 29 décembre 1884

Mon cher et charitable comte<sup>51</sup>,

Je voudrais vous faire une visite et personnellement vous faire bien des actions de grâces. Ne pouvant faire la chose avec des paroles, je désire, que par lettre je finisse l'année en vous écrivant, ô charitable monsieur le comte et madame la comtesse Colle.

Dieu soit béni et remercié, qui nous a conservés en bonne santé, et, je l'espère, aussi dans sa grâce.

Parmi les autres bonnes oeuvres vous avez payées pour don Perrot les dettes de la Navarre; et le bon Dieu ne manquera pas de vous récompenser largement, et nos pauvres orphelins prieront sans cesse à votre intention: heureux don Perrot qui a des payeurs de telle façon.

Mais pourquoi ne pouvons-nous pas trouver des bienfaiteurs semblables en Italie?

<sup>51</sup> Count Fleury Louis Antoine (1822-1888) from Toulon was the most munificent benefactor for the church of the Sacred Heart in Rome and the most generous amongst Don Bosco's benefactors for his work. By his wife Maria Sofia Buchet he had one son who died in 1881 at just 17 years of age. Don Bosco wrote him more than seventy letters.

Si telle payeur existe en Italie, qu'il vienne payer soixante et quinze mille frs. que D. Rua devra payer pour nos missionnaires d'Amérique, une autre somme presque semblable pour le trousseau, pour le voyage de ceux qui partiront au plus tôt?

Pourquoi ne vient-il pas payer les dettes de nos maisons de Turin, et de l'église et hospice de Rome?

La raison est claire. En France et en Italie il y a un seul monsieur le comte Colle; et nous bénissons mille fois le bon Dieu que ce monsieur et madame la comtesse Colle vivent pour nous aider, nous appuyer, nous soutenir dans nos difficultés.

Que Dieu vous conserve tous les deux bien longtemps en bonne santé, et vous donne la grâce de passer encore d'autres et bien d'autres années heureuses comme récompense de vos charités sur la terre, et enfin dans l'autre vie le vrai prix, le grand prix dans le séjour du paradis, où, j'ai pleine confiance, que nous pourrons nous trouver avec Jésus, Marie, notre cher Louis, à louer Dieu, à parler de Dieu éternellement.

Jeudi, premier de l'année 1885. Dans toutes nos maisons, on prie, on fera des communions pour vous.

Veillez aussi recommander votre pauvre à Dieu

Obligé humble serviteur

Abbé J. Bosco

*(Translation)*

My dear and charitable Count,

I would like to pay you a visit and thank you personally so much. Not being able to do so in words, I want to do so by letter as the year concludes, and write to you, dear Count and Countess Colle.

May God be praised and thanked for keeping you in good health, and I hope also in his grace.

Amongst other works, you paid Fr Perrot's debts at Navarre<sup>52</sup>. The good God will not fail to richly reward you, and our poor orphans will pray constantly for your intentions: lucky Fr Perrot who has such people to pay for him.

Why can't we find similar benefactors in Italy?

Why isn't there someone like this in Italy who would pay the 75 thousand francs that Fr Rua has to pay for our missionaries to America, another similar sum for the equipment for the voyage for those leaving as soon as possible?

Who would pay the debts of our house in Turin, and the church and hospice in Rome?

The reason is clear. In France and Italy there is only one Count Colle and we thank the good God a thousand times over that Mr and Mrs Colle are alive to help us, support us, sustain us in our difficulties.

May God keep you both in good health for many more years, and give you the grace to spend even more of the other good and happy years as a reward for your charity on earth, and then in the next life the real prize, the grand prize of being in paradise, where I have full confidence that we will find ourselves with Jesus, Mary, our dear Louis, to praise God, to speak of God eternally.

Thursday, first day of the year 1885. We will pray for you, make our communions for you in all our houses.

And please, recommend to God this poor,  
humble and indebted servant,

Fr J. Bosco

<sup>52</sup> Fr Pietro Perrot (1853-1928), first director of the house at Navarre.

### 146. Circular to Benefactors

ASC A1780705 *Lettere autografe*; ed. in E IV, pp. 363-364.

Turin, 1 November 1886<sup>53</sup>

Worthy Sir,

I received with genuine gratitude the generous offer that your Lordship in his great charity deigned to give for our missionaries who are going to work to win over the savages of America to the Gospel, especially in Patagonia.

Besides their sincere and dutiful thanks they pray in a special way for you and your families. Encouraged by your moral and material help, they will redouble their zeal, and if necessary, willingly give their lives to cooperate in the salvation of souls, spread the kingdom of Jesus Christ and bring religion and civilisation to the peoples and nations who know of neither of these things.

May God bless you all, richly reward your charity and make you happy now and happier still in eternal bliss.

I rejoice in being able to say that I am, in Our Lord Jesus Christ,

Your most indebted servant,

Fr John Bosco

<sup>53</sup> The letter, printed in zincotype (pre-daguerrotype), was used many times (changing the date), until Don Bosco's death. A copy in French is also preserved.